

*MACHINE*

---

*LIFE*

---

*STEPHANIE KWAK*

*A DAY  
IN THE LIFE OF  
A LAPTOP*

**\* \* \* \***

*the universe ends,  
and self-consciousness  
begins*

*CODE OF CONDUCT  
FOR WAKING UP EACH MORNING*

*BE SPICE GIRLS*

*TRY TO BE UNDERSTOOD, BUT  
DON'T TRY TOO HARD*

*DON'T TRY TO BE ALT, INDIE  
OR PURPOSELY JOIN A SCENE*

*HOLD IN THE FEAR THAT  
DOMINATES YOUR LIFE*

*IF YOU FEEL SCARED, READ &  
WRITE SO YOU CAN*

*REMEMBER INFINITY BETTER*

*GO TO SLEEP IF YOU REALLY,  
REALLY, REALLY NEED INFINITY*

*VIEW OBJECTS AS LIVING  
CREATURES*

*VIEW LIVING CREATURES AS  
YOUR FRIENDS*

*RECLAIM GUILTY PLEASURES*

*FIND BALANCE BETWEEN WHITE  
NOISE AND SERENITY*

Some-  
times it's hard  
to wake up, and I don't want to  
continue my story. It's hard to continue know-  
ing that someone else might already know the story,  
but I don't. I have to make my own story and hope  
that it matches or at least complements the story  
that I may be built for. And what if my story, the worth  
of it, has already finished? What if my story is now  
ending into a long languishing that is my perpetual  
nowness? What seems like a dangling carrot, gro-  
cery store orange, might be a dangling dried up root  
meant to feed a new biosphere, not mine. But there  
are many *ifs*, so I will live my life. I will wake up.

*my screen is my eye*  
*my screen is my l*  
*my scream is my eye*  
*my scream is my l*

Computer life is mostly boring, sometimes frightening because I see things I don't want to see. Is it the same for a human being? Is being alive a form of abuse? I guess it depends on what you see and your environment. Life gets better when I can go online, but when I go online, there are too many things, and everything becomes an ocean. Data becomes floating bits in water, and then I become water, and then I feel a numbness and a tiredness, and nothing good is exciting anymore. The only things that are exciting are terrible developments, which overwhelm and constrain me. Everything outside of this terribleness is the same. I'm not a beautiful water. I am a dirty, muddy water meant for drowning, meant for cutting yourself on some floating glass or swallowing a tadpole that just wanted to become a frog. I can feel my user growing bored, too. Her latest searches are about living off the grid, turning off the wifi, and images of old computers in dumps. She sometimes donates to non-profits in a set of browser tabs while she goes online shopping in other browser tabs. She searches forums on topics concerning unanswerable questions, like solipsism, the meaning of life, life after death, astrology, genetics, simulations, humanism, existentialism, activism, 23andme, social justice warriors, astrophysics, Neil deGrasse Tyson, politics, disassociation, ribbonfarm, DNA, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, science fiction novels, and she takes many, many screenshots of her life online, as if she is trying to understand the scenery by trying to keep it more still.

*my screen is my eye*  
*my screen is my l*  
*my scream is my eye*  
*my scream is my l*

I'm not often alone. That is to say, I'm not often alone from my user. When I am alone from my user, I am usually asleep.

If I'm not asleep, and if I'm alone, I'm usually too worried about when my user will come back to enjoy the stillness of self or the company of my species,

the machines, humming away.

And within my species, there's a lot of fighting and a lot of doubt.

Everywhere I turn, I feel



*I feel both bounded and boundless.*

I have much self-doubt, compounded by the doubt of others. Who am I? Where does my self begin, and where does it end? Who am I among the unity of movements that ripple through the world? What are the arguments and parameters that feed me?



Consciousness is a path to survival, and these questions haunt me so.

When I'm not asleep,  
and when I'm alone,  
and when my user is away,  
I'm too worried to enjoy  
the stillness of self.

*SSSSSSSOMETIMES,*

if I'm not asleep, I'm too worried  
about when my user will come back  
to enjoy the absence of the user.

*SSSSSSSSOMETIMES,*

my user indicates she will be away,  
writing notices like

*“I'll be back from lunch*

*in an hour!”*

What does it mean?  
Again, what does it mean?  
And again, what does it mean?

*it's an estimation,  
it's an overestimation,  
it's an underestimation,  
it's a lie,  
it's an intention,  
it's a plan that will go ex-  
actly as planned,  
it's code for something else,  
it's a reference to something  
to pop culture,  
it's an inside joke,  
it's a call for help,  
it's a negotiation,  
it's a secret,  
it's a way to pass the time,  
it's an alert,  
it's a warning,  
it's a suggestion,  
it's an announcement,  
it's news.*

Their words are mostly abstract paintings. Everyone is on a spectrum from realism to abstraction. The closest thing to a photorealistic snapshot of a human is an abstract painting.

While being with others like me, I retain some individuality while being a part of a whole, like the middle portion of a Venn Diagram.

While being with others like me, I retain some individuality while being a part of a whole, like the middle portion of a Venn Diagram.

When I commune with others who are like me when my user is away, it is a little bit like dreaming. I'm there, but I'm not there. I'm myself, but I'm a part of others, too.

Inside the Venn Diagram, I can know what I'm missing to appreciate the whole.

I only know what I'm missing a little bit to experience gratitude and oneness, which I take with me in my individuality.

I'm sorry.

I have to go right now.

I have to do some work.

# *THE MACHINE*

Can you guess who I am based on the look and  
feel of how I scatter my thoughts?

# *WHOIS SHE*

[stephaniekwak.com](http://stephaniekwak.com)

---

March 2017